

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 11, 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman
Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Creek Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi,

On July 19, 2005, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission voted to consider Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana for closure or reduction. As members of the Florida House delegation, we would strongly express our support that former NAS Cecil Field be considered as the location for any or all of NAS Oceana's resources.

Cecil Field is perhaps the only location in the Eastern United States that could readily accommodate the resources currently at NAS Oceana. It offers relatively open surrounding land, close training airspace and bombing ranges, and in-place significant infrastructure. In addition, problems with encroachment and noise restrictions that have plagued NAS Oceana are not an issue at Cecil Field.

In the 1993 BRAC process, the Navy determined that it had excess East Coast tactical aviation infrastructure. At that time, the infrastructure consisted of two Master Jet Bases, Oceana NAS and Cecil Field NAS, as well as two Marine Corps Air Stations and Roosevelt Roads NAS. As a result of this excess capacity, Cecil Field was closed and the Navy left in 1999. Since then, the Navy has also vacated Roosevelt Roads. In addition to the increased air traffic, encroachment has caused Oceana to be seriously degraded. The result, as testified by the CNO before the BRAC Commission, Atlantic Fleet Naval aviators can no longer train effectively in preparation for carrier operations.

NAS Oceana and its Navy Outlying Landing Field (NOLF) Fentress have suffered serious and unabated encroachment and cannot provide the type of aircraft carrier training as prescribed by the Navy. Severe encroachment has impacted flight operations around NAS Oceana and NOLF Fentress to the point that the Navy has had to adjust their flight training such that their flight profiles at Oceana/Fentress no longer replicate those flown for aircraft carrier approaches.

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At NAS Oceana and OLF Fentress Navy pilots must vary their approaches because of the noise restrictions put in place due to residential encroachment. The changed reality at NAS Oceana has caused the Navy to change their longstanding training mantra of repetition. With the introduction of the louder and more disruptive F/A 18 E/F Super Hornet aircraft, it is logical to reason that these noise restrictions will only increase at NAS Oceana.


The problems of encroachment and noise restrictions are not problems at Cecil Field because fewer residents live within the 65 dB noise contour than at Oceana, where approximately 145,000 residents (and growing) live within the noise contour. In addition, community complaints about the noise and "inconvenience" of training at NAS Oceana has been widely reported in stark contrast to the host communities in Florida.

Cecil Field remains the last unencroached upon site in the Eastern United States site capable of accommodating the NAS Oceana mission and personnel. We strongly urge the Commission to seriously consider this proposal and look forward to working with the Commission and the Navy in turning this into reality.

Sincerely,



Cliff Stearns
United States Representative



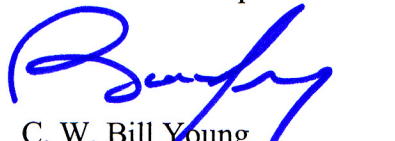
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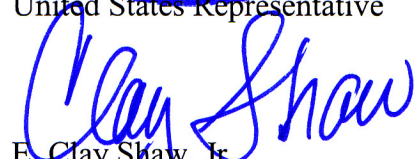
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United States Representative



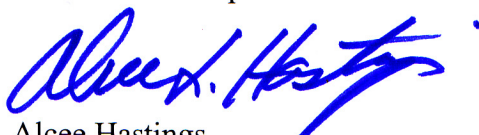
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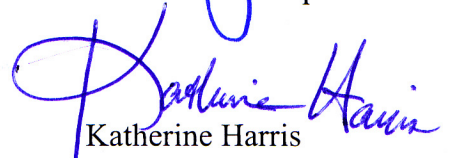
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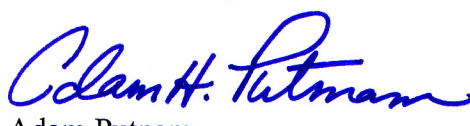
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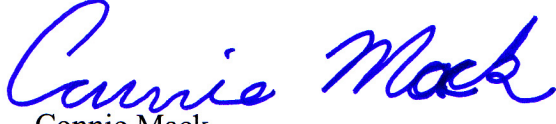
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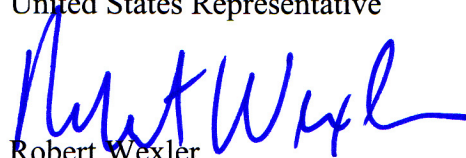
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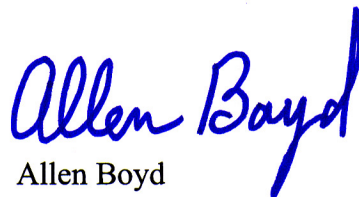
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